

# MILWAUKEE COUNTY HOUSING DIVISION Plan to End Chronic Homelessness

## Background

The Point in Time survey was conducted on January 29, 2014 to count the number of individuals that were homeless on that particular day. The results showed:

- **115 UNSHELTERED PERSONS**
  - 55 chronically homeless
  - 63 individuals report either a mental health or substance abuse issue (55 percent)
  - 62 went to emergency room in last year, 5 over 10 times
  - 49 disabled
  - 3 families
  - 7 domestic violence
  - 10 veterans
- **1086 SHELTERED**
  - 140 chronically homeless
  - 445 report either a mental health or substance abuse issue (41 percent)
  - 586 in shelters
  - 461 in transitional housing
  - 39 in safe haven
  - 628 male
  - 451 female
  - 59 veterans

There is a general consensus that the number of homeless individuals is greater than this count shows. The Point in Time is a snapshot of a specific day and is used to determine HUD funding. This initiative proposes to serve 300 individuals as most providers would agree that we are not reaching every chronically homeless individual that is living on the street.

**This initiative focuses on a dramatic expansion of the Housing First concept.** Housing First is based on the concept that a homeless individual or household's first and primary need is to obtain stable housing. Other issues that affect the household are addressed once housing is obtained. National data shows this model provides very successful outcomes and dramatically reduces public service costs.



Analyzing outcome data of existing programs, as well as additional best practice models, a general plan has been created by the Housing Division that would produce the best results for individuals that are chronically homeless in Milwaukee County. This plan recommends better utilization of existing rental subsidies and service resources, as well as the need to create additional housing and service models focusing on Housing First.

**The following are the specific recommendations of the Housing Division, as well as the cost for each initiative to accomplish the goal of ending chronic homelessness in Milwaukee County within the next three years:**

## 1.) Creation of New Permanent Supportive Housing Using Housing First

The majority of the housing needed for this population is permanent supportive housing that utilizes a rental subsidy along with services. This model has been the focus of the Housing Division since its creation in 2008. The Division has collaborated with the City of Milwaukee, developers and service providers to create over 500 units. This model is particularly effective with the homeless population when a Housing First strategy is used. The Housing First philosophy centers around immediately housing an individual as a first step towards treatment and other wraparound services. This is a best practice model supported by HUD.

The Housing Division has begun to implement this through the work of the Community Intervention Specialist. This individual has housed over 150 individuals since the position was created as part of the Mental Health Redesign and he won the Advocate of the Year from NAMI due to his work with this model. The Division is able to utilize scattered site units so the initiative does not have to rely on construction of new units. This scattered site model follows the Division's successful My Home Program for homeless and disabled individuals in which 99.6% of individuals remain in the program after six months and 68% remain over five years.

The Housing Division is also forming a Housing Access Partnership Committee to work with existing and potential new landlords to expand the access of existing housing units.

The funds for the new 150 Housing First units would cover rental assistance and case management services in a partnership between Milwaukee County, City of Milwaukee and the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee. The City of Milwaukee has committed \$600,000 of HOME funds to provide rental assistance for participants of this initiative. The Housing Division and the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee (HACM) have partnered to come up with a proposal to set aside vouchers for this initiative. HACM is proposing a Memorandum of Agreement with the Housing Division to provide 50 vouchers for the chronically homeless. Referrals would be accepted directly from the Housing Division. Milwaukee County's Section 8 program will also set aside vouchers through a similar process later this summer.

All Housing First units funded by subsidies will be attached to case management services funded through the Housing Division. This new model of case management will be very flexible and person centered to follow the Housing First philosophy.

## 2.) Increase in Housing Division Staff for Implementation

To fully implement this chronic homelessness initiative, additional staff will be put in place to ensure that individuals will be placed into housing quickly and successfully. Following the successful homeless initiative in Utah (chronic homelessness has declined 72% since 2005), the Housing Division will employ Housing Navigators to assist outreach workers and case managers with everything from immediately locating housing units, negotiating with landlords, assisting with income and working with various systems to coordinate care. A

Program Evaluator position will be created to not only track the success and outcomes of this initiative, but to provide the Housing Division with the ability to provide outcome data on all of the County's supportive housing units, similar to what other communities have done to show the effectiveness of supportive housing and have the ability to reallocate funds to programs that show success. Finally, a management position will be created to oversee all of the homeless initiatives set forth in this plan, as well as coordinate other homeless initiatives in Milwaukee County.

## 3.) Projected Increase in the Housing Division's Continuum of Care Rental Assistance (My Home) Funding

The Housing Division will receive an increase in voucher dollars for the My Home program. This program provides rental assistance for those that are homeless and disabled. The budget of the program will increase because of the fair market rent rates in Milwaukee. Milwaukee County will receive \$200,000 of additional funds on July

1, 2015 and then approximately \$100,000 on July 1, 2016. The Housing Division estimates the creation of approximately 60 units with this increase. In order to receive this rental subsidy, Milwaukee County must ensure that case management is provided to the program participants. This initiative would cover the cost of those services.

## 4.) Short-Term Rental Assistance

There are a portion of individuals in the community's shelter system that would be able to maintain permanent housing on their own, but simply need a short-term subsidy due to a loss of employment income or other temporary circumstances. The ability of the Housing Division to offer

short-term rental assistance (similar to Rapid Rehousing) for these individuals would assist them in quickly moving out of shelters. This will be funded by Milwaukee County in 2017.

## 5.) Redesign of the Pathways to Permanent Housing Model

Many individuals are not ready to come into permanent housing due to the severity of their needs or by choice. The Housing Division has had success with the County's Pathways to Permanent Housing program. The goal of this program is to work with hard to serve individuals to transition them into permanent housing by providing on-site services. Pathways has a 70% success rate in placing individuals directly into permanent housing. Individuals are screened to ensure that only participants with the highest need would be placed in the program. The Housing Division proposes to change the target population of this program to serve chronically homeless individuals instead of focusing on those with income. The population

assisted would be those with high utilization rates of other public services such as emergency rooms, detox and other Behavioral Health Division services. It is the Housing Division's belief that additional transitional housing beds would be needed to accomplish the goal of ending chronic homelessness. The redesign of the existing Pathways program would add 27 beds to this initiative without the need to create a new expensive transitional housing model. The cost of this recommendation is approximately \$100,000 due to the loss of rental payments since it is believed all participants will have no income. This will be funded by Milwaukee County in 2017.



